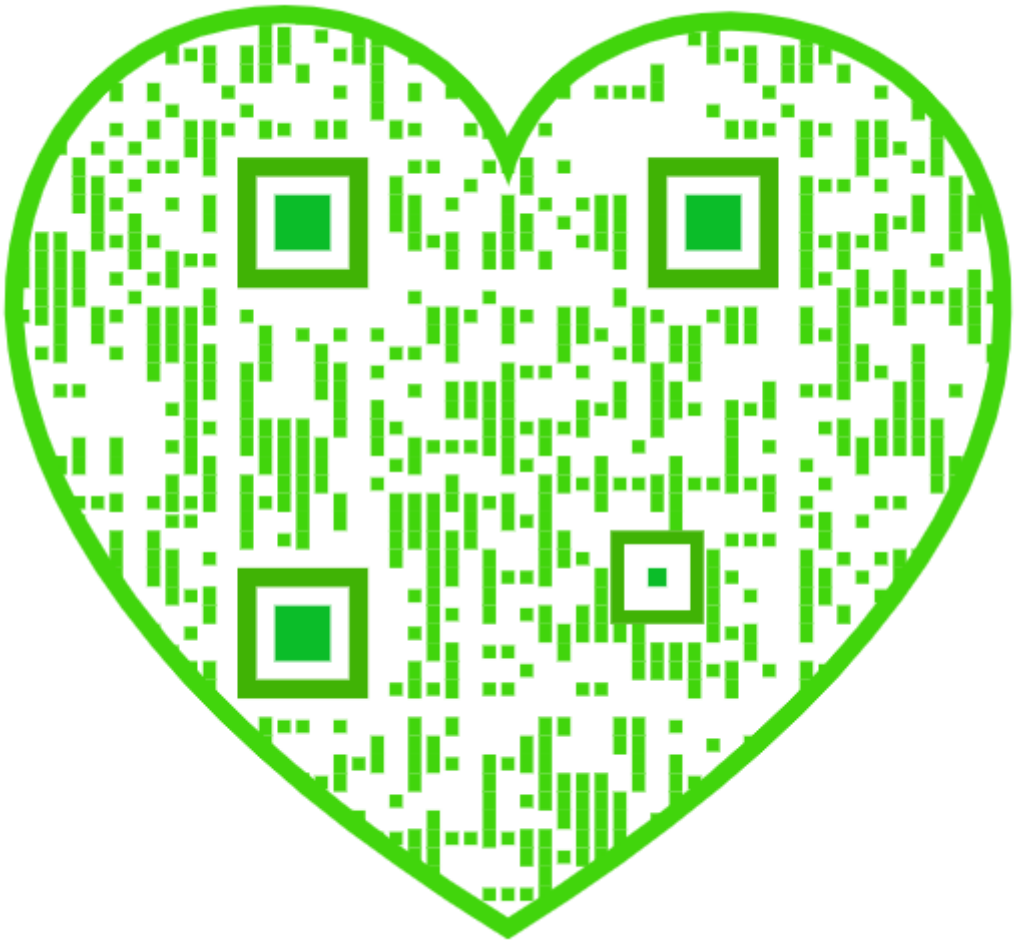

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Philadelphia's Architecture

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Philadelphia's Architecture

WILLIAM F. GRAY

ANY consideration of the architecture of Philadelphia is attended by certain difficulties, not the least of which is the insistent assertion that there is nothing in Philadelphia worthy the term, and that what we have to consider would best be dealt with on archæological lines. It is true that we have structures of various sorts, recalling more or less remotely all the styles of the Renaissance, the middle ages and antiquity, but hardly a single work which could be considered as indigenous, or born of, and expressing native conditions.

But this is a condition which Philadelphia shares with every American city, and the cry goes up all over the country, "Are we ever to have a type or style of architecture which will be really American"? Which sometimes is echoed by the cry of "Do we want it"? This is the age of eclecticism—and cynicism.

Another difficulty is that of establishing a standard of criticism. Somewhere between mere fault-finding and adulation—between the standard of the well-known English author, who, in his two-volume work on modern architecture, mentions three Philadelphia buildings, one of which he considers good under the conditions, one damns with faint praise, and the other with no praise at all—and the local cleric who writes a lengthy and enthusiastic monograph on a very ordinary church.

The absence of any great work of an inspirational character, or of any very definite divisions of style or time, tends to make such a discussion much less easy than it might be otherwise; to which we might add the lack of an historical perspective, and last, but not least, the danger of discussing things which are largely matters of taste.

We are reduced, therefore, to a consideration of the conditions which have brought into existence the various works worthy our consideration.

Nearly fifty years of the history of Penn's colony passed before the appearance of any building of importance.

The first half century or more of existence in a new land would nat-

urally be occupied in the contest with the material conditions, and when there is added a great struggle for political existence, it is not to be wondered that the drain of money and energy precluded any marked attention to the less essential considerations of art and literature, or even science.

The conditions in England, which this part of the country was most likely to reflect, were not at all of a kind to further the arts. During our colonial period they were at almost their lowest ebb in the mother

"GLORIA DEI" CHURCH, KNOWN AS "OLD SWEDES"
Swanson Street below Christian.
It is the oldest church in Philadelphia, dating from 1698.
Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

country, and while here and there in the colonies a limner found a scant livelihood in the making of family portraits, and the country even produced a couple of painters of distinction somewhat later, there was no opportunity for the development of the architect or the sculptor.

The works of this period other than dwellings, shops and taverns are the Old Swedes Church (1700, the First Christ Church of 1710 and

CARPENTERS' HALL

At the head of a court running south from Chestnut Street between Third and Fourth.

Here the First Continental Congress met in 1774.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

the Town House (about 1707) near the foot of Market Street. The latter was little larger than an ordinary dwelling, and for that matter the church is, too. Exactly how and by whom the church was planned is unknown, but it is interesting because of its cruciform plan and its abnormally steep roof, recalling the Scandinavian wood churches. About the first Christ Church very little is known.

Carpenters' Hall, in 1726, is the next important project. Its function as a carpenters' guild hall is very frankly expressed in the strong, vigorous cornices and other wood work. It is probable that the sodality of the carpenters in the colonial period is largely responsible for the excellence of workmanship of the wood detail of the brick and stone houses. One of the aims of the Carpenters' Company being stated in their articles of incorporation to be "to obtain instruction in the science of architecture."

It is significant that when in 1729 a then great public work was to be undertaken in the "Town Church," as the rebuilt Christ Church was often called, it was an amateur who was called upon to furnish the design, though the structure as we see it now shows in its vigorous and effective composition no trace of amateurish weakness.

It is doubtful if Doctor Kearsley planned the church after the method of a practicing architect. In all probability the general scheme was laid out by him, with considerable help from the craftsmen in the execution. The form and details being largely derived from then recent parish churches of London.

As the church was some years in building—the eastern end being erected in 1731 and the "steeple" not completed till 1753—there was abundant opportunity to obtain from England drawings of details and information of all sorts, as well as certain materials such as glass and chandeliers, etc.

It must be kept in mind that Sir Christopher Wren's great activities had just been brought to a close, and his masterpiece, the great cathedral of St. Paul, had been completed only a few years. His followers, Gibbs and Hawksmoor, were at the time building in London such churches as St. Martin's in the Fields and St. Mary's Woolnoth. Christ Church much resembles St. Mary-le-Strand, which was built by Gibbs in 1717, who also added the steeple of St. Clement Danes, though the steeple in storied orders was the invention of Wren.

CHRIST CHURCH
On Second Street, north of Market.
Erected in 1727 to replace a one-story structure which had occupied the site since 1695.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

A great aid to the builders of the time and a considerable source of design for porticos, cornices, doorways, mantels, wainscoting, etc., was a series of books known by such titles as "The Builder's Guide," "The House Carpenter's Assistant," etc., at first brought from England and later published here. These contained carefully engraved plates of the classic orders, profiles of mouldings, usually after Inigo Jones and Sir William Chambers, and based on the latter's "Treatise on Civil Architecture," and compositions into which the classic orders entered.

These formed a sound basis for the work of several decades, and when later there is the inevitable desire for something newer and more elaborate, there is clearly shown a deterioration in purity of form—a failure to adhere to first principles and a tendency to elaborate one work over a preceding one. So successful was Christ Church that Doctor Kearsley was commissioned to furnish the design for the seat of government of the rapidly growing colony. The "State House" (1729-34, steeple later). Too much credit cannot be given for the simplicity and dignity of the design developed under the existing conditions. With its arcades and their terminal pavilions, and the later Congress Hall and mayor's office, it forms an excellent composition. Twenty years later there were built the wings of the Pennsylvania Hospital, connected fifty years later still by the central pavilion on a larger and more imposing scale, which, however, very fitly completes an excellent composition.

CONGRESS HALL
Sixth and Chestnut Streets.
Built in 1790, and occupied by Congress until 1800. Here both Washington and John Adams were inaugurated. On October 25, 1913, restored and rededicated by President Woodrow Wilson.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

In 1761 St. Peter's was built as a "chapel of ease" for Christ's Church, and shortly after St. Paul's, now much altered, was erected.

St. Peter's tall tower and slen-

der spire recall the English village church, while St. Paul's is another of the London parish church type.

ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Third and Pine Streets.
Courtesy of Rev. E. M. Jefferys.

The domestic architecture of this period affords practically no examples of interest. Built solidly in rows, on very moderate scale, there is little or no opportunity for the exercise of any composition in the unfortunately narrow fronts or in the interiors, excepting an occasional doorway or mantel of good design. They are usually sturdy, straightforward and simple in effect.

The Morris House, in South Eighth Street, is the most ambitious and successful of the time. In the districts, then outside, but now included in the city, where more space was available and detached structures were possible, larger scale and freer composition is seen, but even here the historical transcends the architectural interest.

THE MORRIS MANSION
East side of Eighth Street below Walnut.

Courtesy of Effingham B. Morris

The mansions of the type of the Chew House, Stenton and others, vary little in their plan and outward blocky form. In their doorways, cornices and interior trim they follow each other closely, and the evidence of the type forms of the books is everywhere clear. The gratifying feature is the restraint and comparative purity of wood detail shown.

John Bartram's House, which he built himself, is a refreshing example of independent thought and form. The deep, recessed portico has been unfortunately ruined by a wooden shack which should be removed.

In Woodlands we have a somewhat more ambitious project, in which there is a freer disposition of the parts and in their shape. There are octagonal and oval rooms and projecting bays, which are very well dis-

posed and make this a considerable advance on the preceding structures.

Mt. Pleasant, with its symmetrical detached outbuildings, a style more common in Virginia, is another break from the conventional.

In the matter of material Philadelphia is extremely fortunate in the excellent clay of almost the whole plain on which the city proper is built, and which becomes the logical and characteristic building material for the community, a fact too often lost sight of. In the higher outlying

THE WOODLANDS
Residence of James Hamilton.

sections where the rock crops, an abundance of excellent building stone is had often from the very cellar excavations, and becomes the appropriate building material there.

In New England the comparative absence of this kind of stone or of the finer kinds of brick clay brought about the almost universal use of wood for domestic architecture and of the hard granite, expensive to work, for larger construction.

In the South, particularly in Virginia, brick is found the natural material, with greater amount of wood trim externally. The southern houses exhibit the influence of the milder climate on their design, in the extensive porches or verandas, which the more rigorous northern climate makes almost impossible. Indeed in many northern houses there is not even an entrance porch, and the door is flanked by pilasters rather than columns.

JOHN BARTRAM'S RESIDENCE
Designed and built by himself.

The region of Philadelphia presents a sort of middle ground, architecturally as well as geographically.

The use of the abundant soft woods in which delicate mouldings and ornaments were easily worked is another interesting feature. Lacking the durability and the interesting grain and color of the oak so extensively used in England in the preceding century, the practice of painting was soon developed.

When the Revolution was ended, independence attained and a new government established, activity in building was renewed. The State House and newly erected Congress Hall afforded housing for the government officials and Congress for a time, but the newly organized United States Bank required a location, and indicative of the pride and strength of the new nation the most ambitious design was projected.

The classic revival which swept over Europe in the latter part of the eighteenth century and produced so many great structures which were as nearly as possible reproductions of the works of antiquity, had a

GIRARD NATIONAL BANK
Third Street below Chestnut
The building was erected for the first Bank of the United States.
Courtesy of the Bank.

strong influence on the people of the new republic; and while they could not produce such things as the Madelaine or the Pantheon of Paris, or the Royal Exchange or Bank of England of London, they bent their energies in that direction.

The Bank of the United States, now the Girard National Bank, on Third Street, built in 1795, is a dignified and well studied composition

of its class, with a conscientious reproduction of the Roman Corinthian order in the portico which forms the motif for the façade. It was the first white marble building in the country probably, though unfortunately the cornice and pediment are of wood and metal.

The Bank of England had been built only seven or eight years before

THE ARCADE
Formerly on the north side of Chestnut Street between Sixth and Seventh.

by Sir John Soane, but the more direct inspiration of the United States Bank was probably the Royal Exchange of earlier date.

The architectural projects of the town all take on, from this time, a classic or what might be better described as a pseudo-classic character. The first Chestnut Street Theatre of 1793, the Walnut Street Theatre

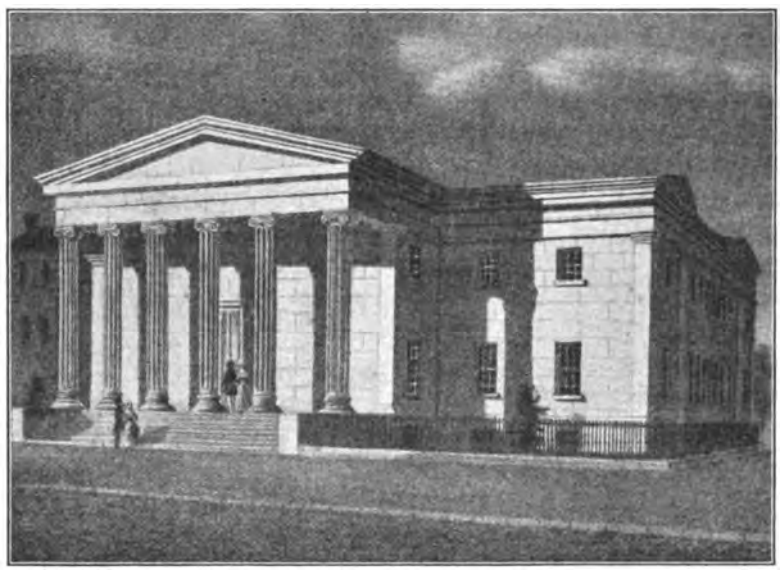
of 1809, the first building of the Academy of the fine Arts and that of Natural Sciences, the Arcade or museum at Sixth and Chestnut Streets, the water works in Centre Square, which belched forth smoke from the summit of its squat dome and a number of minor works are all attempts in the antique styles, but the best of them are only moderately successful.

CENTRE SQUARE WATER WORKS
Formerly at Broad and Market Streets.

In the reproductions of the orders, through the aid of architectural books, they were fairly satisfactory, but in the façades of the theatres and arcade, there is an evident failure to appreciate the finer qualities of design. Some of these were wrought in marble, but most were in brick

covered with stucco and the domes of the academic buildings of wood.

In 1824 with the second United States Bank (now the Custom House) there enters the "Neo-Grec" period. Some years before there had been published in England the result of the researches of Stuart and Revett in Athens on the remains of the glory of ancient Greece, and these had produced a Greek revival in England and Germany. In the former country the façade of the British Museum was the most conspicuous product. In the latter, the Propylæ at Munich and the museums and the Brandenberg Gate at Berlin.



THE UNITED STATES MINT
Formerly at Chestnut and Juniper Streets.

This movement was rather slow in reaching this country, but when it did, probably through the importation of copies of the Stuart and Revett works, it took strong hold and was the dominant element in the design of public and semi-public buildings and larger houses, and even the church people were carried away by the strength of the movement, and elected to worship in as faithful copies as they could afford to make of the temples of Pagan Greece and Rome.

THE COMMERCIAL EXCHANGE
Third, and Dock and Walnut Streets.

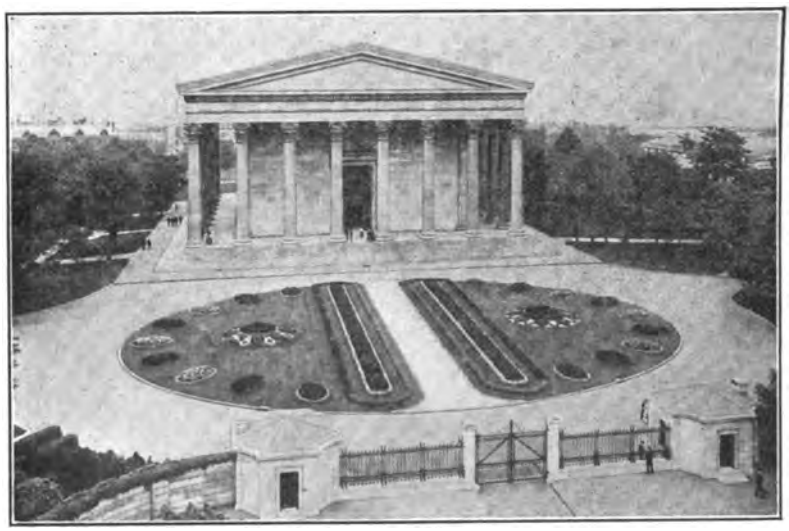
But, alas! The stately columns of these classic fronts, through which the people passed on the Sabbath to worship in truth and holiness, were mere shells of wood, painted and sanded to simulate stone, and the walls were of plastered brick with painted joints of stonework, and behind the fronts there was usually a cheap and utilitarian brick mass.

The Custom House is a study of the Grecian Doric order from the

Parthenon, but the junction of the monumental fronts and the inferior sides is too plainly in evidence to admit of any effect of real dignity.

The Mint, built five years later, was greatly superior in this respect, in that the Grecian Ionic order which characterized it was used in pedimented porticos, the lines of which were consistently continued around the whole building, the sides of which were only properly subordinated to the front.

Both the bank and the mint were the work of William Strickland (1787-1854), the first architect of note in the city. He had been a painter and engraver, a pupil of Latrobe, who built the Fairmount



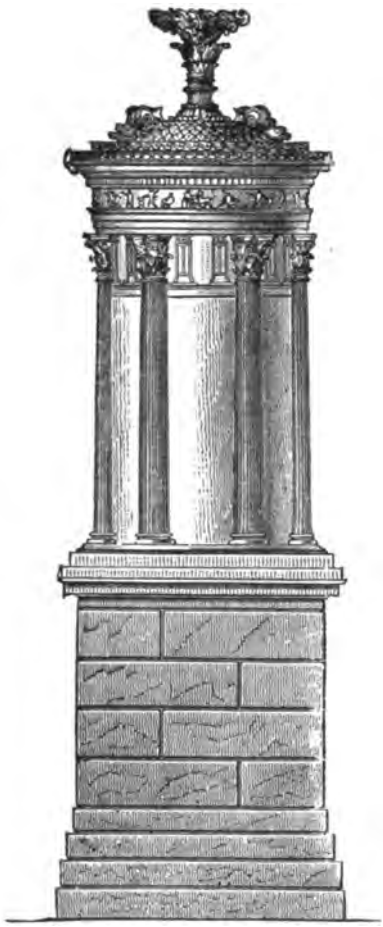
GIRARD COLLEGE
Ridge and Girard Avenues.
Founded by Stephen Girard, in 1831.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

water works. His earliest architectural essays were the first Masonic Temple (burned in 1819) in the Gothic style; the first Custom House (1819) on Second Street, a plain structure of three stories, and the first building of the Academy of Natural Sciences, the shell of which is still standing near Front and Arch Streets. In 1828 he had very successfully remodeled the south side of Independence Hall, rebuilding the steeple and making this the real front. He also designed several of the classic churches and the Gothic St. Stephen's (1832).

As the foremost architect, he was commissioned in 1832 by the "Philadelphia Merchants' Exchange Company" to prepare plans for an exchange building. The result, perhaps to some extent due to the advantageous site, was the most ambitious and successful architectural project in the city up to that time.

His design is, for the period, exceedingly bold and original. The motive is the choragic monument of Lysicrates, one of those illustrated in Stuart and Revett's "Antiquities of Athens," and the use of it in the semi-circular colonnade and the recessed colonnade of the west end is particularly well managed, while the reproduction of the monument as a "cupola" provided a very satisfactory focal point and finial for the composition, of which the exterior stairways are also interesting features.



CHORAGIC MONUMENT OF LYSICRATES

The intersection of the three streets makes this one of the most open spaces near the centre of the city and offers great opportunities architecturally. It is unfortunate that it is not nearer the newer and more rapidly developing centre.

Strickland also designed the Blockley Hospital building, which has a simple dignity due, to some extent, to its high podium or basement, and the Naval Hospital building on Gray's Ferry Road. He also designed the Chestnut Street Theatre (taken down about 1858) and the Arch Street Theatre, which was later considerably altered.

The beautiful little choragic monument also furnished the motive for the main building of Girard College by Thomas U. Walter, which was begun before the Exchange was finished, though not completed till sixteen years later, but its use is much less successful.

The comparative slenderness of the columns and the great intercolumniation produce an effect of decided weakness under the heavy mass of the solid, undecorated pediments, which are not a feature of the monument itself. The building is much too low and broad and the order inappropriate. We have the husks of a Grecian design, but not the kernel; the letter, but not the spirit—the fault, however, is with the times and conditions. Walter's later work on the national capitol at Washington is much more successful.

CHURCH OF ST. LUKE AND EPIPHANY
Thirteenth Street above Spruce.

Courtesy of Rev. D. M. Steele.

The monument was a popular motive in Philadelphia. St. Luke's Church on Thirteenth Street (1837) and the Merchants' Bank on Third Street of about the same time, as well as a number of minor works, were derived from it. The influence of Stuart and Revett's work is also seen in the choice of the choragic monument of Thrasyllus for the motive of the Franklin Institute.

CATHEDRAL OF STS. PETER AND PAUL

During this period there were built a number of churches, as the First Presbyterian on Washington Square in 1821, St. Andrews on South Eighth Street, in the Ionic style, 1823; the Epiphany (which was unique in having real stone columns, though the entablature was of wood and the building behind them of stucco), and a half score of others, as well as a number of institutions, such as the Deaf and Dumb Asylum on South Broad Street.

The Academy of Music, built in 1857, and the Catholic Cathedral on Logan Square, in 1862, are the next works of note—built by the same architect, a Franco-American, Napoleon Le Brun, whose work clearly shows the European training and influence.

The Academy is a very dignified composition and in many ways a worthy work. It is the first large bit of planning in the city. Its interior compares most favorably with the other opera houses of the world of that time.

The choice of material for the exterior was unfortunate. "Pressed" brick, with its slick and characterless surface, was just coming into vogue. Had the design been carried out in stone or in a rough textured brick, it would have been much more monumental in effect. Nearly similar structures recently erected in Boston and Brooklyn illustrate the possibilities of the latter material.

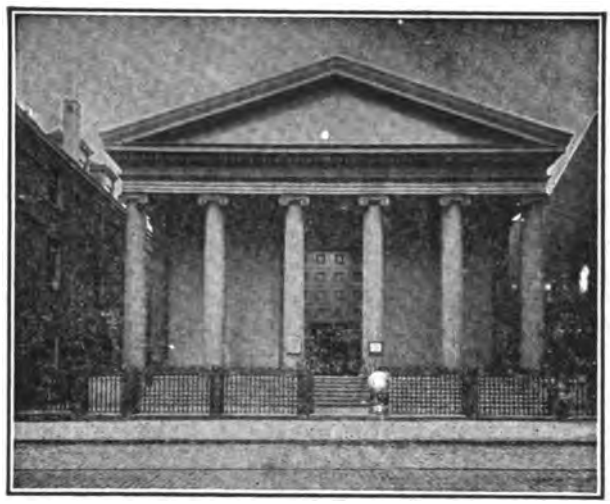
The Cathedral is very like a French or Italian Renaissance church, such as St. Roch, Paris. The colossal orders and large scale of the façade are very imposing from directly in front, but lose much of their effect when they are seen to be a frontispiece for a mass of inferior design and material.

We must all feel grateful for the dome with its fine sweeping lines, which lends an element of variety to the skyline of that portion of the city.

The Gesu Church and St. Charles Borromeo are later examples of this type of Renaissance Church, more interesting internally than externally.

In the Ridgway Library of 1868 we have the last essay of the period in a classic order—the Grecian Doric. With all the allowance possible for the fact that the building is not complete, we must realize that in proportion, in color, tone and, above all, in spirit, the design is woefully lacking.

The domestic work of this period in its more ambitious form is best



ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Eighth Street above Spruce.

Courtesy of Rev. J. J. Joyce Moore.

seen in houses of the type of the Patterson, Physick, and Dundas mansions (1832), in the town houses, in which the orders are fitly used in marble porticos, the houses being usually of stucco, although in the later years, with the rising fortunes of some of the townsmen, houses on a large scale of stone throughout were built, as the Harrison Mansion on Rittenhouse Square (1852) and the Newkirk house, later St. George's Hall. The houses of the first named type, in spite of their rectangularity of form, possess a certain quality of domesticity. In the outskirts a

number of ambitious creations appeared, some with the orders on a large scale, as the Carpenter house in Germantown.

In the storied business buildings of this time the attempts to use the classic forms produced some extraordinary creations, of which the row of banks on the north side of Chestnut Street, from Fourth nearly to Fifth, are later specimens. This is probably the most grotesque row of structures with any pretense to dignity or serious purpose ever assembled. No stronger argument could be advanced in support of the restrictive regulations of certain European cities by which a building is kept in

LEDGER BUILDING
Sixth and Chestnut Streets.

Courtesy of the Public Ledger.

reasonable conformity with its environment. The Jayne buildings of about 1858 and the Public Ledger building are also typical of this time.

The city's most conspicuous work, the City Hall, was begun about a generation too soon, at a most unfortunate period, and under most unfavorable conditions. There was scarcely an American architect living capable of dealing successfully with such a problem. The competition for the design should have been world-wide.

Had the best minds of the old world been brought to bear on the

task the result in design and location would undoubtedly have been happier.

In the matter of location the disagreeable alternatives of covering Washington or Centre Square exhibited the poverty of ideas as concerning the city plan, and the lack of foresight and of grasp of such problems.

We might have had something comparable to the Place de la Concorde on the Centre Square had the city buildings been placed on the West side of that space.

City planning was not an art of Penn's day (though Wren's plan for

ACADEMY OF MUSIC
Broad and Locust Streets.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

rebuilding the burnt section of London had been offered and blindly rejected), and in the light of his time his gridiron arrangement is not deserving of criticism, particularly as he arranged for all the development and growth that any one could then foresee. But the inevitable and tremendous growth of American cities has been clearly evident for nearly a century and should have affected the legislation for all public work.

THE CITY HALL

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

It is our duty *now* not to waste energy in lamenting and criticising conditions, but to endeavor as far as possible to correct them and build for a greater future.

The wise and rational plans furthered by the City Parks Association should be adopted in their entirety. The success of such measures in European and South American cities leaves no doubt as to their wisdom and economy.

It is significant of the rapid improvement in taste and the great development of architectural and building skill that the artistic failure of the City Hall was apparent before it was half finished.

THE UNITED STATES MINT
Seventeenth and Spring Garden Streets.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

As to the conditions responsible for its design, it must be kept in mind that the extensive works of Napoleon III in Paris, including the completion of the Louvre, had only a few years before been carried out, and had, as the most conspicuous work of the time, attracted wide attention, the success being so notable that they greatly influenced all later design, probably being mainly responsible for the shift in this country from English to French motives.

The Federal Government was, with undue haste, filling the country with post offices and other buildings of worse than mediocre design of this type, the Army and Navy Building in Washington by Mullet being the most brilliant failure.

The French scheme of central and terminal pavilions, with intermediate wings or curtains, and the superimposed orders, which have come down from Roman times, are here the dominant features of the design, but lacking in that finer sense of form and proportion, without which the often narrow gap between the sublime and the ridiculous is so easily crossed.

The most conspicuous feature of all, the tower, is least successful. Its manifold subdivisions and broken lines eliminate the finest element in tower design—the simple, upward sweep, seen at its best in the Italian Campanile (of which so striking a type has been recently erected in the Metropolitan Life Building) and in the Spanish Giralda (reproduced in Madison Square Garden in New York). The detail throughout is coarse and exuberant, and the iron cornice is a most egregious error.

It is instructive to compare this work with the Palais de Justice in Brussels, erected about the same time. They are nearly equal in size and cost, but there the resemblance ends.

The post office, by the same designer, MacArthur, would share the same criticism. Here one of the Louvre pavilions has been taken as the central motive, and the lines of the orders carried through the width of the building, producing, with the many vertical divisions, a most unfortunate honeycomb effect.

Compare this example of diffusion with the new Mint, with its broad, simple and dignified treatment, or with the Federal buildings recently erected in many American cities, notably that in Indianapolis, which, by the way, is the work of a Philadelphia firm of architects.

The Masonic Temple, begun in 1872, is a rather heavy, sombre mass, in which there is some good detail, notably the deep, recessed, Romanesque portal. The tower is unfortunately rather attenuated. The location of the entrance in the centre of the narrowest side is a singular sacrifice of opportunity.

THE MASONIC TEMPLE

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

CENTENNIAL

The year of the Centennial Exposition is generally accepted as the time of the beginning of the recent rapid development of American culture, and there is no doubt that the extensive presentation of works of art and art manufacture of the old world of a kind rarely before seen here, gave a splendid impetus to a movement which was accelerated by the subsequent World's Fairs.

This is also the beginning of the great development of trans-Atlantic steamship travel, making the ocean trip not only less dangerous but positively enjoyable and relatively cheaper, so that thousands cross to-day where one did before.

There began also the wonderful development of photography, and the photo-reproductive processes that have in turn brought the great train of abundantly illustrated books and magazines (not to mention the picture post card), and through the tremendously extended visual appeal thus made possible there has been disseminated a vastly wider knowledge and appreciation of all the arts.

There has been no greater factor in the development of taste than this combination of the camera and the press. One has only to look over an illustrated work of the 60's or 70's to see at once how woefully inadequate the wood cuts of that time were in the portrayal of the form and character of the things they represent. The increase in personal and communal wealth has produced a vast quantity of work on a far grander scale and offering greater opportunities.

The buildings of the Centennial Exposition, with one exception, were not notable, and afford an interesting contrast with those of the Chicago, Buffalo and St. Louis Fairs.

The one exception, Memorial Hall, is the work of a foreign designer, and in its evidently superior dignity and character has served as a valuable object lesson.

It is to be expected that this suddenly acquired mass of material produced a period of artistic indigestion, and many attempts to reproduce the works of old world interest resulted in ludicrous failure, but out of all of the trying has come a better understanding and appreciation, and in the last decade or two architecture has been raised to something like its true estate.

It was in the 70's, too, that Hunt, Richardson and Lawrence, the

first Americans to find their way to the architectural school of the Paris Beaux Arts, brought back something of its powerful influence. Hunt has left a very strong impress on the architecture of New York City. Richardson's great personality is manifest in Boston and New England, culminating in Trinity Church. Lawrence got as near Philadelphia as Princeton, where he took up teaching. The influence of these men, through their work and teachings, was most wholesome, and their example was followed by gradually increasing numbers of younger architects, who not only got some of the Beaux Arts training, but saw at short range the best examples of European design.

GOTHIC

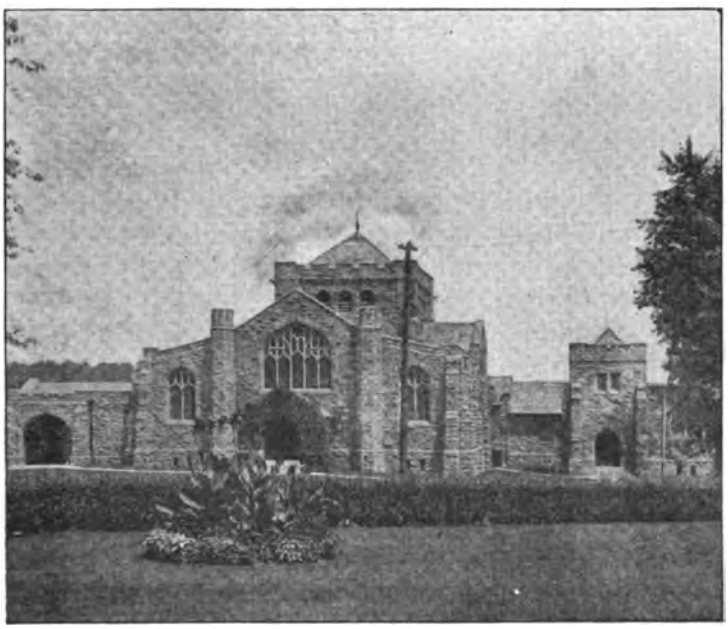
The movement in England to restore Gothic as the national style for civic as well as religious structures, which reached its zenith about the middle of the nineteenth century, found its echo here. The earliest examples of the style here, Latrobe's Philadelphia Bank of 1809, the first Masonic Temple and St. Stephen's Church by Strickland (1832), preceded this movement and were exotic. A transition to Gothic motives in nearly all the churches built gradually took place. The fact that the Gothic as an essentially Christian style particularly appropriate for churches became evident.

The many books issued by the opposing factions of Gothicists in England—Pugin, Street, Rickman, Britton, and others—furnished a fund of information as to the English parish churches, which when closely followed produced some good types for this country, as in St. Mark's, which is refreshingly simple and pure, St. James the Less and a few others. But later the type changed to something very different, something which had pointed windows and spires, but was not Gothic, which was used for divine worship, but was not churchly.

When it comes to worshiping in a church with stone walls and floors the average American gets cold feet, and in the great brood of these creations, which greet one on nearly every other street corner, the first aim seems to be to get something as different as possible in the exterior form and to make the interior as warm and bright as possible, with a nice red carpet and to have the choir in as conspicuous a position as can be, so that the soprano can furnish her weekly hint from Paris and the congregation can see her sing. At one time there was the greatest

rivalry as to which congregation could produce the building with the tallest spire, and a great number of these spindling creations now furnishes occupation for acrobatic steeplejacks.

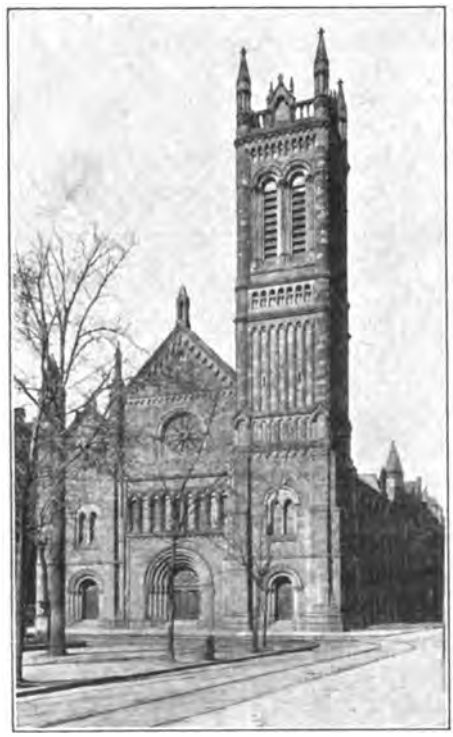
They were built and are being built of every possible proportion, every possible material and with every imaginable sort of masonry, with a total disregard of true Gothic quality, and the standard of taste has apparently improved less in these in recent times than in any other class



ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Overbrook.
Courtesy of Rev. W. F. Turner.

of buildings. The lamp of truth burns very dimly before their altars—in many cases seems to have blown out.

In the generally poor mass, a number of the most recent shine out as superior, conscientious studies of a problem not easy of solution. Among these the Memorial Church of the Advocate, a careful study in the French forms by Mr. Burns, and the Christ Memorial Church at Forty-third and Chestnut Streets, which in its composition and grouping recalls the English type, Salisbury in particular, are notable.



EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY
Nineteenth and Walnut Streets.
Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

A refreshing bit of simple, straightforward chapel design is St. Paul's, Overbrook, and the Lady Chapel recently added to St. Mark's is as pure and fine a bit of Gothic as one could desire.

Other types of church design are exhibited in Holy Trinity and the Church of the Saviour, both worthy studies in the Romanesque style. The Church of the Evangelists, a conscientious study of an early Christian Basilica; a reproduction in the northwestern part of the city of Wren's St. Stephen's, Walbrook, in the church of St. John Chrysostom, and an interesting Byzantine essay by Mr. Seeler in the First Baptist Church at Seventeenth and Sansom Streets.

The synagogue problem seems to have as yet no satisfactory solution. The nearest approach to it we have is in the Rodef Shalom on North Broad Street with a bulbous dome, a study by Mr. Hewitt from the Arabic, particularly the style of the Caliphs' tombs outside Cairo. A Renaissance type at Broad Street and Columbia Avenue (Keneseth Israel), interesting in its dome and campanile, a more recent severely classic example further North, and Beth Israel, a Byzanto-Arabic structure, at Montgomery Avenue and Thirty-second Street, add to the variety.

The Gothic movement affected institutional architecture to a considerable extent. The main buildings of the University of Pennsylvania, the Academy of Natural Sciences, the old building of the Y. M. C. A.

of the early 70's were all inoculated with the Gothic virus, but it didn't "take."

The "T-Square Club," composed of ambitious and studious architects and draughtsmen, formed in 1883 for mutual improvement on professional lines, and interchange of ideas and criticism, has been a most important factor in the uplift of architecture in Philadelphia, and the young men who then banded themselves together and worked so earnestly and effectively for the common interest are the leaders of their profession to-day.

CHURCH OF THE ADVOCATE
Eighteenth and Diamond Streets.

Courtesy of Rev. H. Medary.

Another great influence in the development of a high standard of taste in the city has been the School of Architecture of the University of Pennsylvania, which, immediately after its reorganization in 1891 under Professor Laird, became a centre of architectural authority and activity.

It has steadily and rapidly developed in the hands of its excellent instructors and lecturers until it is now the largest and best school of its kind in the country, and probably the largest in the world after the Paris Beaux Arts.

Through its graduates its influence is strongly in evidence in the work of the last decade or so throughout the city, and in other cities as well.

It is most apparent in the buildings of the University group, and had it accomplished nothing else it would have justified its existence in the

CHURCH OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
Twenty-eighth Street and Susquehanna Avenue.
Courtesy of Rev. J. Sherlock.

guidance of the architectural activities of the great institution across the river.

The contrast between the newer buildings and those into which the University moved, in 1872, on the vacation of the old post office site on Ninth Street, is most striking.

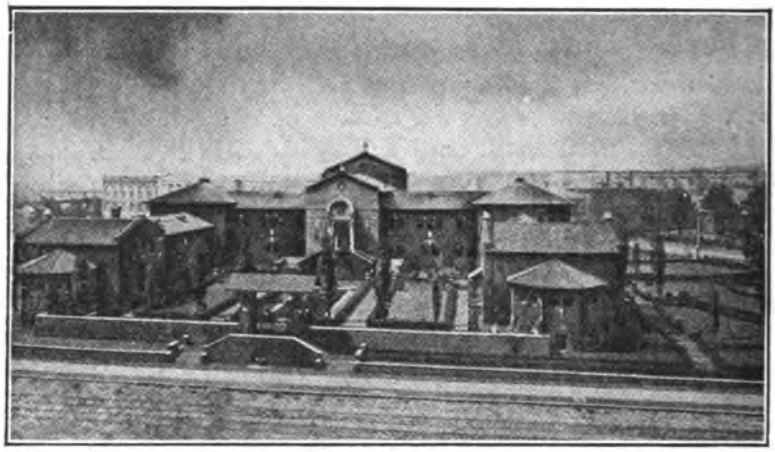
The old buildings were erected in a very weak reflex of the Victorian Gothic style then popular, but only for a brief period, in England. The material, a green serpentine, had been recently discovered in the vicinity of Media, and in spite of its most unfortunate color and poor weathering qualities became—in common with the style set by the main building of the University, which was designed by Professor Richards, the then head of the Architectural Department—quite the vogue.

The Academy of Natural Sciences building at Logan Square, and

KENESETH ISRAEL
Broad Street and Columbia Avenue.
Courtesy of Rev. Joseph Krauskopf.

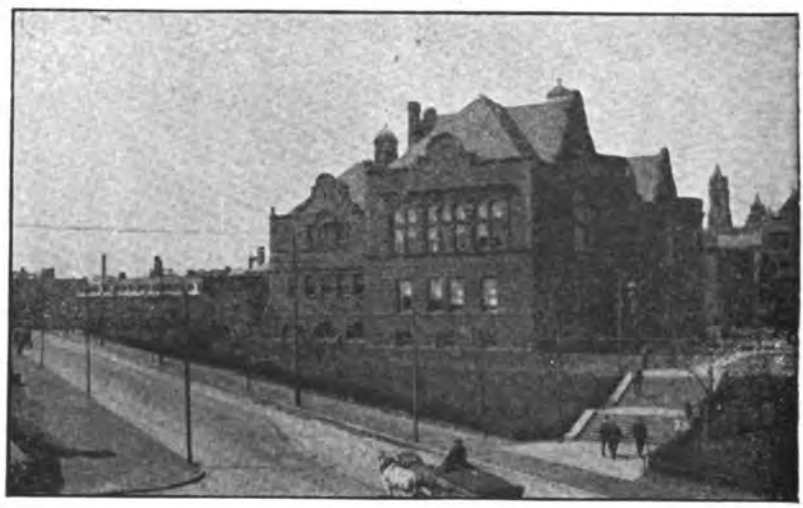
several other institutions, quite a number of churches, schools, and even dwellings, remain as examples of this period.

The University buildings of the new era began in 1893 with the Museum, or the portion so far erected. In this work the best architectural talent of the city was concentrated, Messrs. Frank Miles Day, Walter Cope, John Stewardson and Wilson Eyre, Jr., collaborating.



THE MUSEUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Courtesy of the University.



THE DENTAL SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Courtesy of the University.

THE LAW SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Courtesy of the University.

THE GYMNASIUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Courtesy of the University.

While the Lombard Romanesque motive is evident, the scheme is strong, direct and original, picturesque as well as logical in grouping and with many elements of great interest and charm. The beautiful texture of the walls, the small but well-placed sculpture, the brick work pattern and the interesting colored marble inlaid ornament combine in producing what critics have generally regarded as one of the most beautiful works in the country.

Shortly after the building for the Dental School was erected from

THE NEW MEDICAL BUILDING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Courtesy of the University.

designs by Mr. Seeler, a very good study in a different style, notable for the way in which a necessarily large amount of light was admitted without making the windows obtrusive.

The Law School, a vigorous and scholarly design by Messrs. Cope and Stewardson, followed in 1901.

The Gymnasium, in some ways the finest and most beautiful of all, is

the work of Mr. Day. Its exquisite qualities of design and proportion, and its excellent and logical planning and relation to the athletic field are evident, but it has subtler qualities not so readily perceived by the uninitiated, as the entasis of the towers.

The new Medical building, also by Mr. Day, and the Engineering building by Cope and Stewardson are excellent examples of their style, and fit members of the group.

THE ENGINEERING BUILDING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Courtesy of the University.

The Dormito ries, also the work of Messrs. Cope and Stewardson, and largely due to Mr. Jamieson, of that firm, are the finest modern examples of the Tudor style and of this type of building, which they have made to a great degree their own and extended to other universities and colleges, as Bryn Mawr, Princeton, Washington and Jefferson, and

others. The many individual features of beauty and interest in the buildings and their ornament are combined in a most picturesque way.

It is unfortunate that the change in regime did not take place a few years earlier, as we would have been spared the so-called Library Building with its raw, ugly color, its "original" design and awkward plan and wild and obtrusive "ornament." It is difficult to imagine anything farther from the dignity and repose befitting a library. It has recently been

THE LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Courtesy of the University.

characterized by a Boston critic as "a fortified conservatory." The four-storied reading room is probably the only one of its kind.

The other institutional architecture of the town, which might be expected as the product of the intellect of learned societies, along with the municipal, to furnish high motives and inspiration, sadly fails.

The Academy of Fine Arts is an essay in an original style which returns to first principles, but in its defiance of certain fundamental principles of abstract design and of construction has almost entirely failed. The combination of pointed and segmental arches, the division of the portal by a pillar, which conveys the impression of a prop for a ruptured arch, and the use as a central motive, of a mutilated classic figure,

PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS
Broad and Cherry Streets.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

the character of which is known only to a few, are things which would defeat any design. Any architectural feature which is not self-explanatory is wrong.

The hope of a public library building such as all other great cities possess, or a worthy municipal art gallery which would unite the city's

art collections and interests, and include a worthy collection of casts, which Philadelphia has so long lacked, seems long deferred.

The Academy of Natural Sciences is the most lamentable failure of all. How it is possible for any learned society to develop and exist in such an architectural plum pudding as that on Logan Square is a marvel. The newest of the four buildings has some quality of style, but the least said of the others the better.

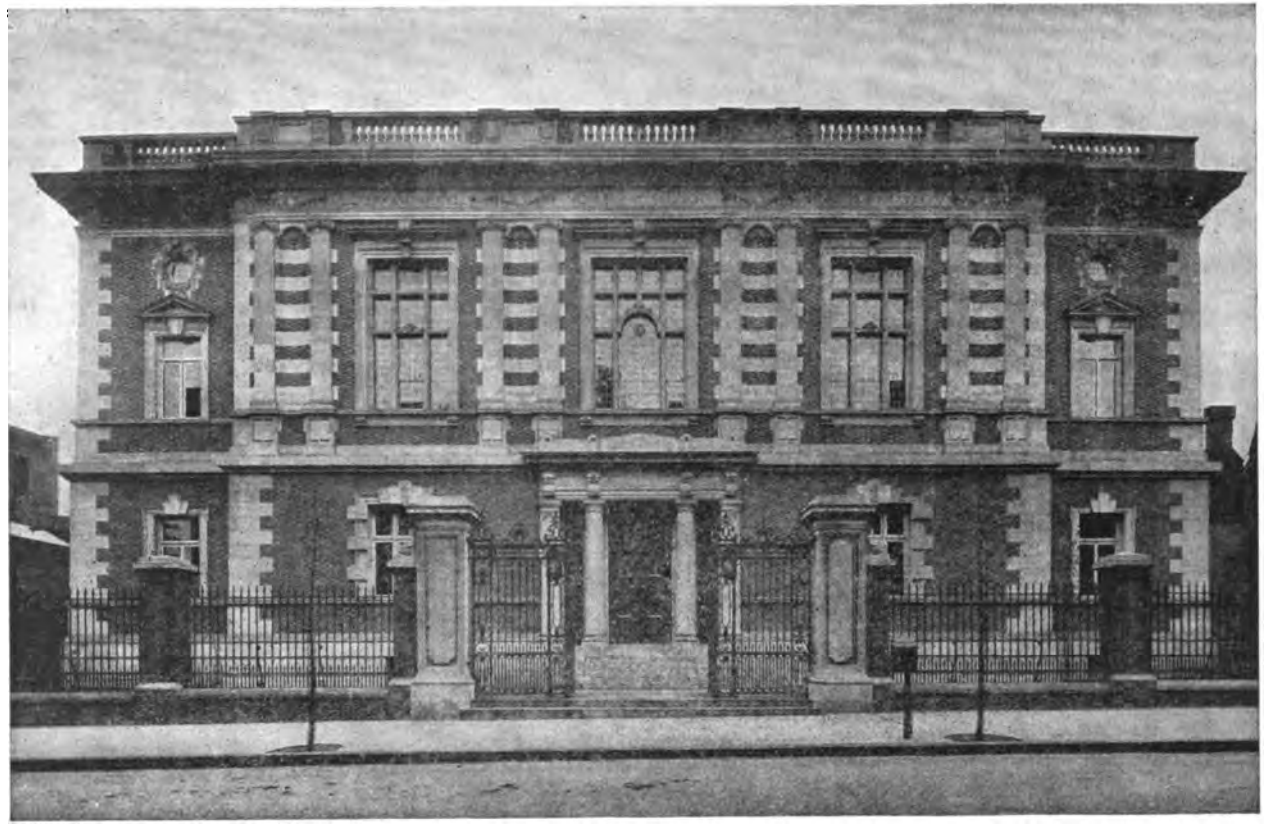
In the recently erected Historical Society Building there is another

QUADRANGLE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
DORMITORIES

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

great disappointment. Thrust obtrusively out to the limit of the building line, devoid of any quality of style, abominably ugly in the color and texture, and apparently aimless in plan, it only adds to the intensity of our yearning to have back the little plots of grass which once brightened the corner on which it stands.

The new College of Physicians Building, just finished, while not well located is a beautiful work and a fine study in its style, of which the



COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
Twenty-second Street above Chestnut.

Courtesy of J. B. Lippincott & Co.

PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTION FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THE BLIND, OVERBROOK
Courtesy of the Institution.

architects, Cope & Stewardson, are masters.

Horticultural Hall, on South Broad Street, the product of Mr. Day's atelier, is an interesting, well proportioned structure in the Italian Renaissance, with a colored frieze, the best essay in polychromatic architecture we have as yet.

Few of the recent local hospital groups present elements of interest, unless it be the wonderful doorway of a new building of the Medico Chi, in which there are combined the Greek and Roman Doric orders, Spanish Renaissance detail and sculptured figures derived from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The buildings are usually erected in haphazard relation and in widely varying styles. The new Municipal Hospital group is being planned on a large scale and promises to be a great improvement.

The Widener Memorial Home is a logical and well designed scheme on dignified lines.

The Blind Asylum at Overbrook is an interesting work in the Spanish mission style, excellent in plan and simple effective ornament.

The new branch library buildings in various parts of the city are almost invariably good in design, and are serving a valuable purpose in establishing in their localities a higher standard of taste in architecture. They have been so well planned and well placed that their educational influence will certainly not be entirely literary.

RAILWAY STATIONS

A railway station in its highest function serves not only its utilitarian purpose, but that of a monumental portal to the city. This is very well expressed in the new Union station in Washington.

Ours utterly fail in this respect, and the great trainsheds which, properly treated, would make most impressive features, are masked by greater office buildings. One is a fantastic, characterless mass, the other a rather good design on broad simple lines, with some recognition of its duty as a great passage portal in the large arches of the centre mass, now obscured by a crude and ugly shed which greatly mars the whole design.

The original Broad Street Station was an excellent bit of terra-cotta design, with a fine tower, but it has been dreadfully mutilated in the rebuilding and extension. Enough remains of the old tower at the north end to afford an illuminating contrast with the newer portion which dominates it. A stranger seeking a railway station would utterly fail to recognize it in either of these buildings.

Much the same can be said of our ferry houses, which, particularly in the new municipal ferry houses in New York and in San Francisco, have been treated in a monumental way.

BUSINESS BUILDINGS

The modern business building, particularly the skyscraper or cloud scratcher, with its rapid increase in height due to the enormous recent development in steel construction, presented a problem that has taken a considerable time in its solution, if, indeed, it may be considered solved.

THE WANAMAKER STORE
The Market and Juniper Streets fronts.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

REAL ESTATE TRUST BUILDING
Southeast corner Broad and Chestnut Streets.

Courtesy of the Real Estate Trust Company.

In the first stages it was treated constructively and decoratively as one story on top of another. The tiresome repetition of the same story motive and lack of dominant element or motive led to the doubling up of stories and the treatment of the rising masses in three or four divisions, rather like one building on another, but this was even less satisfactory, especially when strongly marked arches were flung across intervals at mid-height.

The first of the utlitarian tall building of Chicago, with an absolutely plain brick skin on the steel skeleton, pointed the way to the solution — the treatment of the whole structure as a mass or plinth to be provided with a base and terminal treatment dependent on the nature of the building. All the impressiveness of the mass is thereby accentuated and the problem brought back to first principles, easier of solution.

The finest examples of this higher

LINCOLN (BETZ) BUILDING
Northeast corner Broad Street and South Penn Square.

Courtesy of the Owners.

WEST END TRUST BUILDING
Southwest corner Broad Street and South Penn Square.

Courtesy of the West End Trust Company.

developed type are the Wanamaker Building, with its simple, impressive mass, recalling the Florentine palaces, and the newer of Land Title Buildings. The difference in feeling developed in the few years between the latter's construction and that of its older brother is very marked.

The Real Estate Trust Company Building is another good type. The older buildings in East Market and Chestnut Streets show some of the earlier phases, including the cast iron fronts, in which the orders, one for each story, are superimposed, and the Drexel Building is an example of the intermediate type. The Betz, Arcade, and West End Buildings show the result of absolute failure to appreciate the principles of design in a large way.

Interesting sidelights on the problem are afforded by the Crozer and Harrison buildings, both possessing excellent qualities in design and ornament.

CROZER BUILDING
1420 Chestnut Street.

Courtesy of the Owners.

Hotels and apartment houses figure relatively little in Philadelphia life, which may account in a degree for the fact that we have none of either worth considering from an architectural standpoint—except negatively. If there is any more extraordinary creation than the Hotel Walton it is in some very remote town, and any one who can live in one of several West Philadelphia apartment houses without having a nervous spasm at every entry is devoid of any finer sensibilities.

HOTEL WALTON
Southeast corner of Broad and Locust Streets.
Courtesy of the Hotel Owners.

SCHOOLS

We have been more unfortunate perhaps in our public schools than in any other class of buildings. As public buildings, widely scattered through the whole community and often the most conspicuous structures in their neighborhoods, they should be of the best possible design, not

only as reflecting the taste and intelligence of the city as a whole, but as affecting local conditions. They should be an inspiration to those who use and see them. But for forty or fifty years they were designed by men without taste or training, and we have been afflicted with hundreds of buildings which are not only mediocre, but in many cases positively offensive in their ugliness.

Within the last five or six years, through the infusion of new blood

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL
Broad and Green Streets.

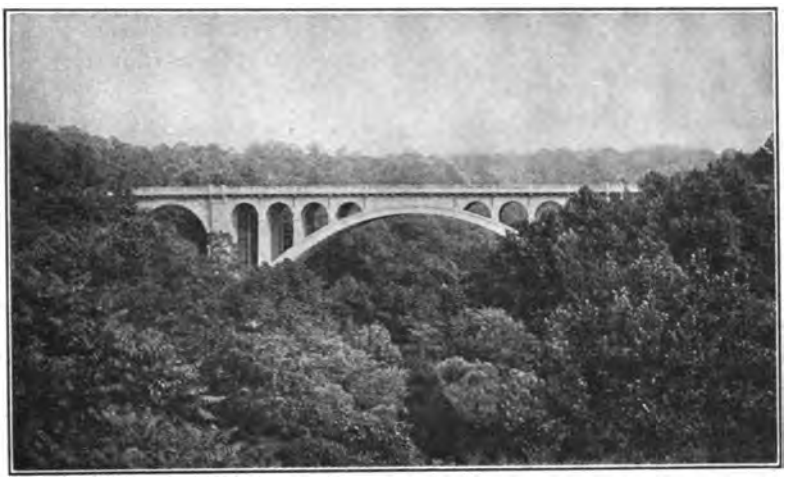
Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

in the system and the entrusting of the designing to properly trained and equipped men there has been a vast improvement, and a newer and finer type of structure, fit for and expressive of its purpose, is springing up. mostly in the outskirts where they are demanded by the growing population.

The contrast between the Girls' Normal School and the most recent high school (the William Penn) is very expressive of the changed conditions and standards. The Central High School building marks an intermediate step.

Boston and many other large cities employ the best available architectural talent in the design of schools, throwing open the work to the widest competition and securing thereby the best ideas of many designers, with a result that may be called inspiring.

The products of the municipal architects are mainly of a utilitarian



WALNUT LANE BRIDGE OVER THE WISSAHICKON

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

character, but recently they have become factors in the aspect of the city. Several new bridges, notably the graceful Walnut Lane structure and several on the line of the Northeast Boulevard, are worthy of comparison with the best old world creations. The police and fire stations have improved greatly in recent years.

The architectural work in connection with the new Queen Lane filter plant, designed by a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture, who has studied abroad, promises to be of a really high character, and we have much to look forward to in the improvement of the hitherto uninteresting utilitarian public works.

DOMESTIC

Philadelphia has no really imposing residence street or section, but scattered about the town, more numerous perhaps in the near southwest section, are many excellent specimens of domestic design. Domestic in the fullest sense of the word in that they exhibit the happy union of good design with all the qualities of the homelike. There are only a comparative few so pretentious that they seem to be built for show rather than to live in comfortably and happily. This type of house is distinctly a Philadelphia product—the best work of her architects.

Most of these have been built within the last fifteen or twenty years, and some of the best very recently, replacing the rectilinear box of brick and white marble which has been the trade-mark of the city for nearly a century.

How the division of ground into the narrow deep lots has been brought about is difficult to determine, but it has developed a cramped kind of corridor house into which a minimum of sunlight and air enter, with ill proportioned and shapeless rooms and narrow, cramped stairways.

A squarer lot would have permitted a more rational and wholesome plan and invited a less unattractive front of more variety.

Nothing can illustrate the poverty of ideas in the builders of the average Philadelphia dwelling than the stupid way in which the plan of the houses in the middle of a block has been monotonously carried out to the ends, sacrificing the best possible opportunity for an individual treatment, as well as precious air and light.

The rectification of this blunder is producing some of our happiest and most interesting work in this field to-day.

Some of the recent domestic work most notable has shown very clearly how opportunities have been neglected in past generations. The Yarnall house at Seventeenth and Locust Streets (Mr. Frank Miles Day), the Bell house at Twenty-first and Locust Streets, the Butcher home at Twenty-second and Locust Streets (Mr. Medary), the Van Rensselaer and Drexel houses (Peabody & Stearns) on Rittenhouse Square are so simply and evidently successful as to make the blind neglect of our fathers in this direction incomprehensible.

That the narrow fronts within the block do not preclude good design and individual treatment is abundantly shown by many of the re-

modeled houses in the same section. Two on Walnut Street, east of Twentieth, one on Chestnut Street, east of Twenty-first, one on South Rittenhouse Square (Mr. Wilson Eyre), may be cited of the many to show a wide variety of excellent arrangements which serve to make their older neighbors seem even more characterless and uninteresting. Two brick houses on the North side of Locust Street, East of Juniper, by Mr. Eyre, and one by Mr. Day, are splendid examples of what can be done with greater width and better proportioned lots.

RESIDENCE OF JOHN C. BELL
Corner of Twenty-second and Locust Streets.
Courtesy of John C. Bell, Esq.

In the minor domestic work, in the hundreds of thousands of small homes which are Philadelphia's boast, we find a most unfortunate lack of architectural interest, not justifiable on account of their individual lack of importance; because collectively they are of very *great* importance and might fairly command the services of the best architects in the creation of good types and motives. It is an unfortunately indicative fact that the most fantastically gabled and elaborately tin-coated houses are the "best sellers."

In a few isolated spots in West and North Philadelphia and in the new Girard Estate improvement in South Philadelphia there is a consistent effort to do something worth while. But in the great mass of these houses there is a lamentable absence of taste and, worse still, of integrity. Sheet metal masquerading as stone in grotesque gables and

cornices, to which the paint is evidently ashamed to stick, and many other such anomalies being numerous.

RECORD BUILDING
Chestnut Street below Tenth.
Courtesy of the Philadelphia Record.

Philadelphia has her full share of architectural aberrations, most of them so conspicuously located that they cannot help but serve to dull the senses of those on whose attention they are forced.

It is difficult to tell which is the most blatant and offensive of these. Within a few blocks on Chestnut Street stand two egregious freaks, the Record Building, in which every canon of design is violated short of inverting the building, and the old Chestnut Street Bank Building, equally defiant of the laws of design.

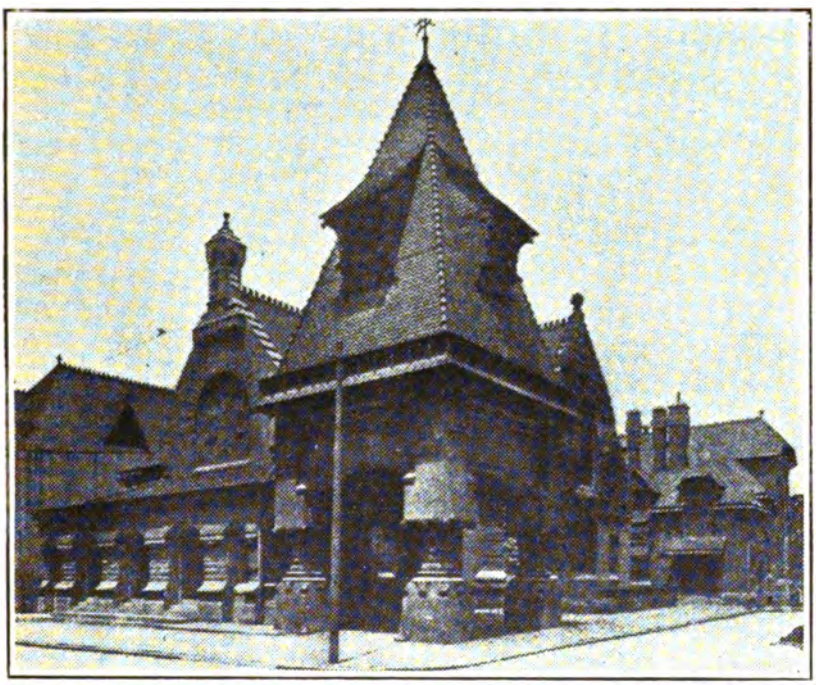
Another work of the perpetrator of the latter is the old Keystone Bank Building on the corner of Juniper Street. The gentleman who concocted this evidently did not read Ruskin's denunciation of the Fleet Street façade of stone on top of a plate glass window till after the building was up, and finding a law of good taste unviolated proceeded to remove the mass of stone below and substituted a great window, as we see it at present.

The other gentleman who evolved the University of Pennsylvania Library, the First Unitarian Church, and Broad Street Station, also produced the Provident Life and Trust Company Building, which might have easily been considered as an ogre's castle in a fairy story. The Young Women's Christian Association Building and the Baptist Temple may be cited as additional examples of blundering composition.

Occasional lapses from good form or failures to attain the highest mark may be overlooked, but these are so monstrously ugly that there is absolutely no excuse for them, and one can only hope that in the march of improvement they will soon give way to better things.

It is impossible to predict the future of Philadelphia's architecture as of anything else, but there is every reason to feel that it will share in the advance—material and artistic—of this greatest of nations, and aid in the development of a healthier, more intellectual and more beautiful city.

It is manifestly out of the question to satisfactorily cover so large a



FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
2135 Chestnut Street.

Courtesy of Rev. Charles E. St. John.

subject in so short a time. I shall feel satisfied if I have offered some basis and some material for your more extended consideration.

POSTSCRIPT

In the interval between the delivery of this talk and its publication, there have been erected, particulary in the central district a number of structures, some of which are notable.

GIRARD TRUST BUILDING
Northwest corner Broad and Chestnut Streets.
Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

THE "UNION LEAGUE"
Old building on Broad Street and new building on Fifteenth Street.
Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL
Southeast corner Broad and Walnut Streets.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

The Girard Trust building with its very careful and finished rendering of a Grecian Ionic order in its portico, is unfortunately only one more illustration of the futility of using a material which will not stay white in an atmosphere full of sulphurous gases. One rather feels that a simpler order would be more expressive of the purpose and that the Roman Doric or Ionic would have been more in harmony with the dome. If the smokestack could only be run up inside the Morris Building, it would not injure that structure any in appearance.

It is unfortunate that the owners of this and several other neighboring tall buildings could not see their way clear to a more monumental treatment, such as happily promises to be a feature of the new Widener Building, which also is designed with proper regard to its proximity with the Wanamaker Store. Let us hope that the time will soon come when the Lincoln and Franklin Bank

BELLEVUE-STRATFORD HOTEL
Southwest corner Broad and Walnut Streets.

Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

buildings give way to a fit third of this group, as is promised by their owner. What a contrast is afforded by those South-east and South-west corners of Penn Square.

In the recently finished Ritz-Carlton Hotel we have a truly fine bit of design and a most illuminating contrast with its big neighbor across the street. In one there is beauty and refinement, particularly in the details of the Walnut Street facade, which is totally lacking in the other.

The Manufacturers' Club on the third corner is a rather academic design

NEW BUILDING OF THE MANUFACTURERS' CLUB
Broad and Walnut Streets.
Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

with good detail, which has a very picturesque quality imparted to it through the very slow drying out of the lime stone used. The imposing new Western addition of the Union League, recalling an Italian Renaissance palace, makes the original structure look quite homely—and home-like too perhaps. "Marble Halls" are often imposing but not usually comfortable. Much the

same might be said of the Racquet Club. The Art, University and Rittenhouse seem to have most happily the real Club feeling.

St. Patrick's Church, near Twentieth and Locust Streets, is a distinct and welcome addition to the number of good church buildings. It is in the Early Christian Basilican style and very well studied. The Church of St. Francis de Sales, in West Philadelphia, is another rather interesting structure, of which the glazed dome, after the manner of the Spanish Renaissance, and the terra-cotta interior, are the best features.

The completion of the first of the domes of the University Archæological Museums group, is probably the most notable recent work in town. It is a really fine creation, recalling somewhat the Lantern tower

CURTIS BUILDING
Sixth to Seventh, Walnut to Sansom Streets.
Courtesy of John Wanamaker.

of S. Maria della Grazie at Milan, and provides the needed façal point of the section so far erected.

The beautiful little building of Dropsie College, on North Broad Street, near York, is worthy the most careful study. It is a little classic in its refined simplicity.

A significant development of the last two or three years is the removal of the miscellaneous exterior of the Academy of Natural Sciences Buildings and the replacing of it with a uniform veneer in the English Renaissance style.

The neighborhood of Independence Square has developed considerable interest architecturally through the construction of the Curtis building recently completed and the Penn Mutual building now under way, both the work of Mr. Seeler. The former, impressive in its mass is beautifully wrought in every detail both internally and externally, and the choice of style and material eminently fit for the purpose and the environment. In the latter which is also very carefully studied in its parts, the architect has defied tradition in dividing the structure into three uniform bands of which neither dominates. It will be interesting to note the result.

These new projects together with the promised removal of the hideous granite coping and straight walks of Independence Square and its restoration to something like its original condition, count for much in the effect of this historic locality. The small bankers' offices along the east side of the square are, some of them excellent minor works by-the-way, while the restoration of Congress Hall following that of Independence Hall, under the direction of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, reflects great credit upon the good taste and public spirit of that body, which numbers among its most active members many men who have produced best things, architectually, of the present day.

City History Society of Philadelphia

ORGANIZED MARCH 8TH, 1900 CHARTERED JANUARY 29TH, 1914

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